

INNOVATING AND IMPROVING EDUCATION

Components of Iowa's Race to the Top Phase 2 Application

To support the work of school districts across the state in meeting the goals of high expectations for all students, Iowa is applying for Phase 2 of the federal Race to the Top grant, the \$4.35 billion competitive grant program.

In Phase 1, only two states – Delaware and Tennessee – were awarded funds.

However, after analyzing scores and comments about Iowa's original application – as well as feedback from superintendents, school board presidents, and teachers association presidents from across the state – **Iowa can be competitive in the Phase 2 application process in a way that supports our education reform priorities as well as our commitment to local control.**

This document provides an overview of the key components of Iowa's Race to the Top Phase 2 application, and a summary of how school districts participate in this effort, in areas such as:

- State success factors
- Standards and assessments
- Data systems to support instruction
- Great teachers and leaders
- Turning around the lowest-achieving schools

(A) State Success Factors

(A) (1) Articulating State’s education reform agenda and LEAs’ participation in it (65 points)

Overview and Current Status

Students in Iowa deserve an education that helps them succeed in today’s technology rich, global economy. To deliver that education, Iowa has a ground-breaking statewide focus on education innovation and 21st-century learning outcomes. These outcomes are embodied in “the Iowa Core” and in the vision for Iowa’s Race to the Top plans.

Passed by the Iowa legislature and signed into law by Governor Chet Culver in spring 2008, the Iowa Core (also known as Model Core Curriculum) builds on our state’s long history of local, community leadership in education and relies on partners across the state for full implementation in high schools by 2012 and in elementary and middle schools by 2014. It does so by helping teachers take learning to a deeper level and by focusing on a well-researched set of essential concepts and skills in literacy, math, science, social studies, and 21st-century learning skills (civic literacy, financial literacy, technology literacy, health literacy, and employability skills).

The Core is not course-based, but rather is a student-based approach that supports high expectations and achievement for all students. *In this way, the Core provides a foundation for moving toward a competency-based system of education.*

Implementing the Iowa Core requires developing authentic measures of student achievement and growth—which include the standardized achievement scores we have used as a state for more than 70 years, as well as multiple, authentic measures in both tested and untested subjects—every part of our system will move toward a more individualized model of student and professional practice and performance. Having multiple valid and reliable measures of student growth—that teachers and administrators across the state help to develop—will deepen our ability to make instructional decisions. It also will advance our ability to allow students to achieve credits based on competence and not seat time. Districts in Iowa already have the authority to do this, which is one more way Iowa is unique nationally. Already, our teachers and principals—and our regional support systems—are held to high standards of practice. What we now we need resources, tools, and innovative ideas to help us make a competency-based system come alive. Our Race to the Top program will provide all three.

State Plan

Our Race to the Top plans focus on continuing to move toward competency-based systems for student performance and promotion (described in section (A)(1) and (B)(2)), teacher and administrator preparation (described in section (D)(4)), teacher and principal practice (described in section (D)(1)), and innovative practice throughout. Though we have the backbone in place with the Iowa Core and will garner resources, tools, and innovations through our Race to the Top

program, we recognize that fully implementing a new system of competency-based education will not be easy. We are asking our teachers, administrators, parents, policy makers, and community members to let go of many of our most cherished notions of schooling. Everywhere we turn, current policies, structures, and practices in education are implicated in sustaining our 20th-century system of education, which is book-based, and largely designed for individual teachers directing instruction for 20–30 students within the four walls of a classroom housed in a free-standing school building. We look to move our education system into the current century, where Iowa’s students have access to engaging, robust learning opportunities in personalized learning environments that provide for anytime, everywhere learning and opportunities for team-based, inquiry-oriented, project-based tasks, and where advancement is performance-based rather than time-based. Thus, Iowa will use the Race to the Top program to provide the technology, information, and resources to back up the will we have garnered to change the policies and practices that are keeping us from transforming our schools.

Through Race to the Top, a subset of Iowa’s school districts will implement early projects to create learning environments that help students achieve the essential concepts and skills as embodied in the Iowa Core. By the end of the third year, all districts participating in Race to the Top will develop a plan for competency-based credit and promotion and will implement that plan in the fourth year.

District Participation

For districts to participate in Iowa’s Race to the Top plan and receive funds, they must submit a signed Race to the Top Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) by May 14, 2010. (In this MOU, they must affirm engagement in practices already required by state law or code, as well as agree to several new practices. All such practices are noted in the “District Participation” boxes below; new practices are marked with the “NEW” call-out symbol.)

In order to demonstrate commitment to the statewide plan, districts will be asked to agree to collaborate with other school districts, AEAs, community colleges, higher education institutions, and other supporting agencies to meet the requirements of the Race to the Top program.

Districts will implement competency-based credit and promotion for a grade span, content area, or 21st-century skill by the end of the third year of Iowa’s Race to the Top program, using guidance from the pilot state project, and will begin implementing the plan during the fourth year.

(A)(2) Building strong statewide capacity to implement, scale up and sustain proposed plans (30 points)

Overview and Current Status

Over the past several years, Iowa has strategically engaged and supported its network of regional service agencies, the Area Education Agencies (AEAs). Compared to other states, we have a unique and effective set of relationships between the state, the AEAs, and the districts. We will build upon and strengthen this network of support as we implement our Race to the Top plans.

In July 2009, the Iowa Department of Education convened a Research to Action Forum to investigate how the state could effectively scale up its many research-based improvement initiatives and achieve the vision embodied in the Iowa Core. Two points were central to this investigation: (1) current plans for scaling up effective initiatives are going to overwhelm the system and (2) each of us will have to do our jobs differently if we want to create new systems of learning and teaching. Iowa is working with the State Implementation and Scaling up of Evidence-based Practices (SISEP) Center and West Wind Education Policy to bring their experiences in creating infrastructures for leadership and implementation in state education systems to Iowa's context. The development of implementation teams, which include practitioners from the state, regional, district, and school levels, is the heart of the infrastructure. As Dr. Dean Fixsen, co-founder of SISEP, notes, as the science and practice of implementation expands, the value of implementation teams is becoming more apparent (e.g. success rates increase from 14% to 80%). Competent implementation teams are critical elements of a State infrastructure for full and effective use of evidence-based practices and other innovations in education.

The plans for building implementation capacity are emerging in the context of implementing the Iowa Core and evaluating implementation statewide. The Iowa Department of Education will continue to provide program oversight for the Iowa Core, and will do so in ways that promote innovation and support over monitoring and compliance. Statewide, Iowa's many stakeholders will remain critical to the implementation of the Iowa Core and Iowa's Race to the Top plans.

State Plan

Out of our investigation into implementation and leadership capacity for system change has come a commitment to re-orienting and re-organizing the way we do our work at the Iowa Department of Education. We also will develop implementation teams for the Race to the Top plans that will include DE staff, staff of Area Educational Agencies, representatives of institutions of higher education and statewide associations, and participants from local districts, including teachers, administrators, and community members, as well as experts from other fields.

While all of Iowa's Race to the Top plans incorporate necessary steps toward implementing competency-based education systems, we will engage a special Innovation Zone project focused specifically on piloting competency-based credit and promotion for students. The Innovation project will require a state/AEA/district transformation and implementation team, and will involve higher education, the business community, students and their families, and the broader community of stakeholders in the effort.

The Iowa Department of Education will deepen its evaluation of its Race to the Top program by looking at increases in student achievement and growth (discussed in section (B)); district implementation (how districts and schools are doing what they laid out in their plans); and how implementation has changed the culture of schools and schooling. Toward this end and toward the goal of improving professional development, the state will craft a data platform to capture from districts their lessons learned, as well as multiple, authentic measures of student growth and achievement (described in (B)(2)) and examples of exemplary teacher practice (described in (D)(1)). (We hope to build toward the collection of examples of exemplary school leader practice, as well.)

The Iowa Department of Education will increase its capacity for communicating about its Race to the Top program, both to local districts and to the public at large, including collecting and disseminating lessons learned in implementation. We will hold an annual statewide conference to share lessons learned and encourage ongoing community engagement in implementing the Race to the Top program.

As always, the DE will provide grant oversight and program support.

District Participation

Districts must take part in a survey in the fall of 2010 to gather baseline data necessary for tracking implementation of the Race to the Top program. (Costs of the evaluation will be covered by the state.)

Districts must affirm they will work with community members and other supporting agencies in implementing the Race to the Top program.

(A)(3) Demonstrating significant progress in raising achievement and closing gaps (30 points)

Overview and Current Status

Creating competency-based systems of education and implementing the Iowa Core are part of our comprehensive strategy for raising student achievement. Incorporated into that strategy is

specific attention to interrupting patterns of lower achievement that emerge among subgroups of students. While the federal Race to the Top application specifically addresses subgroups of students by poverty and by race, we also include students with disabilities and English Language Learners in our plans. This section of the application specifically asks for information about efforts to raise the achievement of students of color and students in poverty.

In 2003, Iowa launched an inclusive effort to develop guiding intervention and infrastructure frameworks for Iowa's system of learning supports, with a particular commitment to better serving students in poverty. In the fall of 2004, the design document for a System of Learning Supports, "Developing Our Youth: Fulfilling a Promise, Investing in Iowa's Future—Enhancing Iowa's Systems of Supports for Learning and Development," was finalized. The document calls for rethinking the directions for student supports in order to reduce fragmentation in the system and increase the effectiveness and efficiency by which it operates. The design calls for engagement in a continuous improvement process that includes: (1) analysis of academic, social, emotional, and behavioral data to identify areas of strength and weakness, (2) resource mapping (3) identification of quality supports (4) matching supports with needs, (5) community partnerships, and (6) monitoring and evaluation of supports. Since that time, several schools have agreed to participate in the implementation of the Learning Supports program. Baseline data is currently being collected for those schools.

Iowa also utilizes its system of Parent Information Resource Centers, operated by the School Administrators of Iowa, to help districts meaningfully engage parents in their children's education and overcome achievement gaps by wealth and income.

Further, Iowa has invested in several efforts to address and overcome racial disparities. We have offered some powerful learning experiences organized around the work of Dr. Tyrone Howard of UCLA and we have engaged in cross-sector conversations about racial disproportionality in our services and outcomes. We have also embedded a cultural competency strand into the work of redesigning the role of the central office in our largest districts. However, our success overall has not been to the levels we had hoped. Thus, we are ready to take a fresh look at the impact of race on student experiences and achievement in the context of transforming education.

State Plan

Iowa recognizes that while our plans for developing competency-based systems of education and implementing the Iowa Core will transform learning environments for all children, our efforts to date have suffered because we have not been equally attentive to the particular strengths brought and challenges faced by students in poverty and by students of color in our predominantly white, middle-class education systems.

We now recognize that to address racial disparities in education, issues of race must be acknowledge and addressed head-on. While minority enrollment across the state increased from 5.5 % a decade ago to 15.5% in 2008, 84.5% of Iowa students are white. For too long, we have been focusing solely on improving instruction in reading and mathematics in our attempts to overcome racial disparities in student achievement. We have not focused as intently on the issues of race that undergird racial disparities. Thus, our Race to the Top plans include a concerted statewide initiative to develop a collaboration among districts, and AEA, the Department of Education, and other child serving agencies to develop critical cultural competence and to recognize necessary systemic changes. Further, we will undertake a coordinated effort to identify additional ways to systemically engage, learn from, and support children and families in poverty.

District Participation

Districts demonstrate in an annual report to the public their progress on increasing achievement overall and reductions in achievement disparities among subgroups of students.

(B) Standards and Assessments

(B)(1) Developing and adopting common standards (40 points)

Overview and Current Status

Iowa was an early signatory to the Common Core Standards initiative, in which 48 states in total have agreement to participate. Iowa has played a leadership role in the Common Core initiative, having met with authors of the Common Core and discussed Iowa's interests and concerns.

State Plan

Iowa will continue to play a leadership role as the Common Core is drafted. As soon as it is available to states, Iowa will undertake a process of adopting and integrating the Common Core with the Iowa Core. We will re-convene the work groups that developed the Iowa Core to ensure alignment and integration between the Common Core and the Iowa Core.

(B)(2) Developing and implementing common, high-quality assessments (10 points)

Overview and Current Status

Iowa began systematically using student assessment data to improve instruction long before most states imagined a statewide standards and assessments strategy. In 1935, the Iowa Statewide Testing Program was developed as a voluntary, non-profit cooperative program for Iowa schools provided as a service to the schools by the University of Iowa College of Education. The initial Iowa Every Pupil Tests became the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS), and are used in grades K–8. Schools participating in the program subscribe to a comprehensive program of professional services: ITBS test materials, scoring and reporting services, and consultation are available throughout the school year. In 1942, the Iowa Tests of Educational Development (ITEDs) were provided for grades 9–12. Virtually all Iowa school districts—both public and private—have voluntarily participated in this program annually since its inception. ***That means Iowa has used assessment data for more than 70 years.*** This magnificent history has provided every teacher with information about each of his or her students, and has created a culture of data use for instructional improvement.

State Plan

Iowa is committed to developing assessments that support instructional improvement and that provide multiple, authentic examples of student growth and exemplary teacher practice toward that end. In order to pool resources with other states also interested in these guiding purposes,

Iowa will participate in a multi-state consortium on balanced assessment. Through the consortium, Iowa will:

- Develop and build professional development materials around the instructional integration of Common Core standards with the Iowa Core;
- Contribute to the development of a benchmark assessment item bank with the capabilities for adaptive testing;
- Have access to a computerized system that will provide opportunities for districts to load the system with formative assessment tasks, items, and instructional materials including performance assessments;
- Define the level at which districts/schools in the state participate in the balanced formative and benchmark assessment system;
- Contribute to the development of district, school, and student-level performance reports on the Common Core;
- Contribute to the development of hands-on training and workshop modules for educators that focus on user-friendly strategies to make data-informed instructional decisions based upon formative, benchmark, and summative assessment results.

(B)(3) Supporting the transition to enhanced standards and high-quality assessments (20 points)

State Plan

The experience of 70-plus years of using assessment data also has led Iowa to an understanding and commitment that no one test is sufficient for high-stakes decisions, as well as to our commitment to expand the quality of and access to multiple, authentic measures of student achievement and growth that are comparable across classrooms. The challenge we intend to undertake is to appropriately measure students' acquisition of the essential concepts and skills articulated in the Iowa Core, including 21st-century skills, utilizing multiple measures over time.

We then will incorporate these measures into our data system (section (C)), teacher and administrator evaluation system (section (D)), evaluation of our statewide initiatives, including the Iowa Core (section (A)), and our infrastructure to drive improvements in our lowest-achieving schools (section (E)). Therefore, in addition to the work on balanced assessment that will be accomplished through the multi-state assessment consortium, Iowa will invest Race to the Top funds in developing multiple/authentic measures of student achievement and growth that are

comparable across classrooms for use in evaluation of the Iowa Core, professional development, and, when deemed valid and reliable, teacher and administrator evaluation. We anticipate the development of these multiple measures will take at least the first three years of the grant period.

We will develop high quality professional development on the local implementation of a balanced assessment system, and will use the AEA network to support districts in this endeavor. All professional development activities that are focused on instructional improvement will follow the Iowa Professional Development Model. We also intend to develop new resources to support implementation of the Iowa Core, including video samples of teachers and a bank of instructional, leadership, organizational, and community practices that support students' achievement of the essential concepts and skills embodied in the Iowa Core.

District Participation

Districts must affirm they will implement a local instructional improvement program to ensure students acquire the essential concepts and skills embodied in the Iowa Core. Such a program is required by school improvement plans and incorporates:

- A strong and enacted curriculum,
- Effective curricular materials,
- Professional development,
- District-wide balanced assessment system, and the use of information on student achievement and growth to inform and improve instruction.

Districts must agree to share implementation data/information/lessons learned with the state.

Districts must agree to submit multiple, authentic measures of student growth and achievement to the state to help develop comparable measures across classrooms. (Districts would be contributing to an assessment item bank that teachers can access to use in developing classroom assessments and rubrics they can use to evaluate their own students' work and that broad-based teams will use to help develop valid and reliable measures of student growth.)

(C) Data Systems to Support Instruction

(C)(1) Fully implementing a statewide longitudinal data system (24 points – 2 points per America COMPETES element)

Overview and Current Status

Over the past decade, Iowa has developed a number of high quality data systems at the state and local levels. For the most part, however, these systems are distinct—prekindergarten, K–12, community college, public postsecondary, private postsecondary, and financial aid. Iowa has begun to move toward greater interconnectivity and greater ability for robust data analysis. To this end, Iowa recently invested \$2.9 million in its data warehouse, called EdInsight. The state was recently awarded a grant for \$8.8 million over five years from the Institute for Education Sciences (IES) to expand and refine its statewide longitudinal data system (SLDS). Iowa also has applied for a Statewide Longitudinal Data System Recovery Act grant from the Department of Education.

State Plan

Iowa will increase the number of additional indicators in the SLDS, with a particular focus on early childhood assessments, in order to provide developmentally appropriate multiple measures of student learning. Currently districts and schools collect a range of indicators, such as DIBELS and a kindergarten literacy assessment. Building the SLDS to be able to handle and relate different measures of student learning is critical for districts and schools to be able to make more informed decisions about student learning and progress. Additionally, Iowa will include fiscal, operations, and other types of system data in the state’s SLDS, in order to better evaluate system effectiveness.

(C)(2) Accessing and using State data (5 points)

Overview and Current Status

One of the key elements in developing Iowa’s SLDS is providing the Iowa Department of Education (IDE), Area Education Agencies (AEAs), school districts, principals, teachers, LEA leaders, and community members access to appropriate education data, reports, and decision support tools through a flexible, easy-to-use web interface. A limited rollout of EdInsight, Iowa’s SLDS reporting tool, has already been initiated (in October 2009, EdInsight Version 1.0 was released with access to a limited number of IDE, AEA, and local district staff). A statewide rollout to the broader education community is the next critical step, while being cognizant of the security issues in disseminating such data.

State Plan

Evaluating the effectiveness of the SLDS and other state data platforms and systems will allow Iowa to better understand who is using EdInsight, and how users can more effectively use this system to inform practice. Additionally, Iowa will create a tiered system of access to Iowa's SLDS for key stakeholders (parents, students, teachers, principals, LEA leaders, community members, unions, researchers, and policymakers), depending on security level and expertise in analyzing data. For example, teachers and principals might have access to individual student data, while policy makers and community members likely would be able to access data only at the school level. Terms of use of the SLDS would be developed in collaboration with teachers, administrators, and education policy makers in consultation with national experts, and would be developed with the confidentiality of students and teachers in mind.

Finally, to create a robust and user-friendly SLDS will require Iowa to continue to develop interoperability standards so that multiple measures of student learning can be linked to one another.

(C)(3) Using data to improve instruction (18 points)

Overview and current status

Iowa has a strong commitment to helping students achieve the essential skills and concepts in the Iowa Core, and to the use of multiple measures of student achievement and growth to determine teacher, principal, and school-wide performance for the purpose of informing decisions about instructional improvement and professional development. Developing local instructional improvement systems that enable teachers and administrators to better address those skills and concepts is critical to Iowa's innovative stance towards educational improvement. Currently, districts in Iowa have a large number of possible local instructional improvement systems to choose from. However, districts are being overwhelmed by these choices, and by identifying how to ensure that these systems are linked to the specific skills and concepts in the Iowa Core.

State Plan

Iowa plans to use its Race to the Top funds to implement an instructional improvement program focused on balanced assessment (using formative, interim/benchmark, and summative information on student achievement and growth to inform instruction). This is more fully described in section (B). The state will also assist local districts in linking these local instructional improvement systems to the specific skills and concepts in the Iowa Core, providing professional development to local districts around demonstrated, effective, instructional improvement systems, and training a wide range of stakeholders on how to access and effectively use the state's longitudinal data system through its portal, EdInsight. Finally, there is

a need to improve the timeliness of data reports from SLDS and local instructional improvement systems to support decision makers in continuous improvement.

District Participation

Districts must agree they will collect and submit examples of student work for the purpose of developing multiple, authentic measures of student achievement and growth and teacher work to support professional development. (This would be combined with the infrastructure required in section (B)(3). All submissions of student and teacher work will be confidential.)

Districts must agree that their local instructional improvement systems will provide teachers, principals, and administrators with the information and resources they need to inform and improve their instructional practices, decision making, and overall effectiveness.

Districts must agree they will take part in professional development provided by the state on using data in balanced assessment and instructional improvement systems.

Districts must agree they will make data on student achievement and growth available to researchers as appropriate and as allowed by FERPA with respect to student and teacher confidentiality.

(D) Great Teachers and Leaders (138 total points)

(D)(1) Providing high-quality pathways for aspiring teachers and principals (21 points)

Overview and Current Status

Iowa has long believed the future of educational improvement lies in the professionals within our systems. We have a history of developing standards of professional practice, a research-based Iowa Professional Development Model, criteria for teacher and administrator evaluation, high quality trainings for teacher and principal evaluators, alternative routes into teaching and administration, systematic increases in teacher pay, and the use of student achievement data for instructional improvement.

In terms of alternative routes into teaching and administration, Iowa implemented the Teacher Intern Preparation Program and we take part in the federal Troops to Teachers program. We further take a portfolio approach to certification for out-of-state teachers licensed through alternative routes. In terms of principal preparation, Iowa has led the nation in development alternative routes to licensure. We have approved a principal preparation program developed and run by community partners outside of the higher education system. The School Administrators of Iowa and two of the Area Educational Agencies have joined in partnership to present the Northwest Iowa Principal Leadership Academy (NWIPLA), which provides an alternative route to certification. They have experienced tremendous success in the program. Iowa's traditional administrator preparation programs further have undergone a complete re-engineering as described in section (D)(4) below.

State Plan

In line with our vision to continue to move toward a competency-based approach to teacher and principal preparation, we will expand the NWIPLA to serve other regions within the state. We will continue the Teacher Intern Preparation Program, the Troops to Teachers program, the portfolio approach to certification for out-of-state teachers licensed through alternative routes. Through our Teacher Quality Partnership work, we will explore additional opportunities for competency-based teacher and principal preparation, which maintain high standards for entry into the profession.

(D)(2) Improving teacher and principal effectiveness based on performance (58 points)

Overview and Current Status

Iowa believes a comprehensive evaluation system should serve two important purposes. First and foremost, a comprehensive evaluation system should foster professional growth. It should improve the overall quality of educators by identifying collective and individual strengths upon

which to build, highly effective educators to serve as masters and/or mentors, and ineffective educators for remediation. Second (and related), a comprehensive evaluation system should allow for transparent and fair employment decisions (e.g., rehiring, dismissal, career paths, tenure). A comprehensive evaluation system should be aligned to and support standards for professional practice, high quality assessment practices, and a systems of supports. Professional practice standards in Iowa were developed by members of the profession in collaboration with stakeholders; they provide a clear and common vision for the profession and include criteria for effective practice. We are building more and better assessment practices that utilize valid and reliable multiple measures appropriate for different stages in an educator's career (e.g., novice, mid-career, veteran), and incorporate a variety of techniques (e.g., observation, self-assessment, artifacts, portfolios) and many different types of measures (e.g., student achievement, student growth, student performances and portfolios, parent surveys) and items that reflect teaching and learning conditions, including physical/structural elements as well as school culture and climate.

Iowa has made significant progress toward the creation of the comprehensive evaluation system described above. However, Iowa recognizes that its work is far from over. Teaching, leading, and learning are complex, and Iowa is committed to ensuring its evaluation system reflects and embraces the complexity. Further, Iowa understands that in order for its education community to buy into, unite under, and benefit from an evaluation system, the development of such evaluation system must include and involve everyone. Thus, the following plan for building a comprehensive evaluation system reflects Iowa's fundamental beliefs about teaching, leading, and learning, and includes and involves the entire Iowa education community.

State Plan

Currently, the Iowa Testing Program reports to teachers and principals student achievement and growth by classroom and by school. As noted, however, this one measure is not sufficient for making high-stakes decisions in any teacher or principal evaluation. Thus, the challenge we will undertake through the Race to the Top program will be to take the multiple, authentic measures of student achievement and growth that are discussed in section (B) and to appropriately incorporate these measures into the comprehensive educator evaluation system as a significant factor such that the system will remain rigorous, transparent, fair, and increasingly useful.

We further will expand the teacher Pay-for-Performance and Career Ladder pilot projects that the legislature authorized over the past several years. We will continue to evaluate these pilots in order to inform state and local policy on teacher compensation and career advancement.

The state also will provide examples of potential measures of the effectiveness of professional learning communities so that districts can support movement toward new systems of teaching and learning.

District Participation

Districts must affirm they engage in teacher and principal evaluation as required in the Iowa Code.

Specifically, districts must affirm the following:

- (a) For teachers holding an initial license, they conduct annual summative evaluations;
- (b) For career teachers with a standard license, they conduct formative evaluations of performance every first and second year of the evaluation cycle for each teacher and a summative evaluation every third year.
- (c) For principals with an initial license, they conduct annual summative evaluations,
- (d) For principals with a professional administrator license, they conduct formative evaluations of performance every first and second year of the evaluation cycle for each principal and a summative evaluation every third year;
- (e) For superintendents, they conduct formative evaluations of performance every first and second year of the evaluation cycle and a summative evaluation every third year.

Districts must agree they will contribute to the development of authentic/multiple measures of student achievement and growth (described in section (B)).

Districts must agree to work toward increasing the inclusion of student achievement and growth as a more significant factor in teacher, principal, and superintendent evaluation.

Districts must affirm that all teacher evaluations are conducted by licensed evaluators.

Districts must affirm they use evaluations to inform individual and school-/district-wide professional development.

Districts must affirm they use teacher, principal, and superintendent evaluations to inform decisions about employment as provided in the Iowa Code.

Districts must affirm they use teacher evaluations to inform tenure and/or full certification.

(D)(3) Ensuring equitable distribution of effective teachers and principals (25 points)

Overview and Current Status

Iowa's Revised Teacher Equity Plan (December 2006) defines "high-minority" schools as schools with minority enrollment over 25 percent and "low-minority" schools as schools with minority enrollment less than 10 percent. While minority enrollment across the state increased

from 5.5 % a decade ago to 15.5% in 2008, 84.5% of Iowa students are white. Thus, Iowa has very few school buildings with minority populations over 25% (or even between 10% and 24%). Further, most of Iowa's high-minority schools are located in urban areas, which are attractive to teachers. Thus, these areas have not had difficulty attracting and retaining highly qualified teachers.

Similarly, Iowa's Revised Title II Plan (December 2006) defines high-poverty schools as those schools in the top quartile for free/reduced lunch eligibility and "low-poverty" schools as schools in the bottom quartile for free/reduced lunch eligibility. With few exceptions, there is little measurable difference among the qualifications and experience of teachers in high-poverty and low-poverty schools.

While Iowa has not experienced a widespread challenge in staffing high-minority and high-poverty schools with qualified teachers, Market Factor Pay was provided by the legislature and funds are still available to some districts. Further, the legislature made a commitment to raising teacher salaries to make Iowa more competitive in attracting and retaining teachers. Iowa also has a loan forgiveness program to attract and retain teachers in the profession.

State Plan

The Race to the Top program is looking beyond measures of teacher "quality," such as those outlined in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, for new measures of teacher "effectiveness." While the Race to the Top application provides sample definitions of "effective" and "highly effective" teachers and principals, these are not appropriate to Iowa's context. Thus, in the first year of implementing the Race to the Top program, Iowa would convene working groups that include teachers, administrators, school board members, business and community representatives, elected officials, and national experts to work on definitions of "effective" and "highly effective" practice, as required in the Race to the Top program.

While Iowa does not have a widespread problem attracting and retaining effective teachers in its high-poverty and high-minority schools, Race to the Top funds will be used to create an incentive fund that districts can apply for when retirements and other shifts in staffing forecast an inequitable distribution of teachers for students in poverty and students of color.

Iowa also will continue programs to recruit more and more diverse teacher candidates and teachers, including supporting the TQ(3) project to develop a pool of diverse and highly qualified teachers and administrators for Iowa's rural students. (Participants in the TQ(3) project include The University of Iowa, Iowa Department of Education, William Penn University, Iowa's 10 Area Education Agencies, Rockwell Collins, Dardis Communications, and 48 qualified LEAs and 63 schools in Iowa.)

District Participation

Districts must affirm they will track and ensure equitable distribution of effective teachers and principals in high-poverty and/or high-minority schools, as the available pool of teachers and principals allows.

Districts must affirm they will track and ensure equitable distribution of effective teachers in hard-to-staff subjects and specialty areas, as the available pool of teachers allows.

(D)(4) Improving the effectiveness of teacher and principal preparation programs (14 points)

Overview and Current Status

There is a strong history of collaboration among the Iowa Department of Education and Iowa's teacher and principal preparation programs, and Iowa has a history of monitoring programs, supporting successful programs, and working collaboratively with programs in need of improvement. All colleges and universities engaged in practitioner preparation in Iowa are subject to approval by the State Board of Education as provided in the Code of Iowa. In 2006, the State Board of Education sunsetted all administrator preparation programs that were in operation and required completely re-engineered programs to be submitted for approval. Over the past several years, our administrator preparation programs have undertaken a serious effort to re-orient their programs to support Iowa's vision for school leadership. Each program must meet the standards outlined in the Iowa Administrative Code, Chapter 79. Currently, there are 32 four-year colleges and universities approved to prepare teachers and five four-year colleges and universities to prepare principals in Iowa. Additionally, the Northwest Iowa Principal Leadership Academy is approved to prepare principals in Iowa. There are four four-year colleges and universities approved to prepare superintendents.

Finally, an innovative part of our work to improve administrator preparation is providing opportunities for the Iowa Council of Professors of Educational Administration to have access to professional development both alongside practitioners and aimed specifically at them. We have evidence this has made their programs more connected to actual practice.

State Plan

Starting this fall, the department will provide preparation programs with data on how students assigned to teachers and administrators from their programs performed on ITBS and ITED. As Iowa develops multiple, authentic measures of student performance and growth, these measures also will be made available to the preparation programs in the state.

Iowa also will continue to support improvements in the preparation programs with the most promising plans for moving toward a competency-based system.

(D)(5) Providing effective support to teachers and principals (20 points)

Overview and Current Status

We know that teachers and principals master their craft not as isolated individuals but through mentoring, job-embedded professional development, and as members of collaborative, interdisciplinary teams with common goals for achievement. Thus, we must give teachers time to imagine, read, practice, innovate, reflect, and grow together toward achieving both class and school goals. We must guarantee administrators time to engage with other administrators—a rare but necessary aspect of effective leadership. We also must attend to transitions into and throughout the lifecycle of a teacher and an administrator, providing the essential growth opportunities and support for ever-improving professional practice.

Iowa has a powerful induction and mentoring program, through which every new educator enters into a two-year teacher induction program that addresses the educator's personal and professional needs and trains him or her on Iowa's eight teaching standards. A mentor is assigned to each educator—not to evaluate for employment purposes, but to observe, critique, and provide support and advice on effective teaching practices. A parallel program exists for new administrators, which is one year in length.

Iowa also has a statewide network of professional development for Iowa teachers. The Iowa Professional Development Model provides the foundation of all professional development supported by the state. The IPDM is a collaborative effort of the Iowa Department of Education and a stakeholders group representing area education agencies (AEAs), professional organizations (teachers, administrators, school boards), school districts, higher education, and other providers of professional development in the state of Iowa. The model reflects their study, collaboration, reflection and negotiation and provides an invaluable roadmap to the conduct of staff development for educators in Iowa.

State Plan

Iowa will use its Race to the Top program to improve the quality of the induction and mentoring programs. We will coordinate professional development on balanced assessment/formative assessment/assessment literacy (described in section (B)). Through the Teacher Quality Partnership, we will develop and implement an integrated technology platform to store digital artifacts documenting effective teaching in support of teacher preparation and professional development. We further will expand the training and support of evaluators of both teachers and administrators.

We further will measure, evaluate, and continuously improve on the effectiveness of those supports in order to help Iowa's students achieve the essential concepts and skills embodied in the Iowa Core.

District Participation

Districts must agree to submit teacher and student work samples to support professional development, as outlined in the Teacher Quality Partnership plan.

Districts must affirm they use data on student achievement and growth to determine the professional development it provides/requires.

Districts must ensure their professional development to improve teaching and learning follows the Iowa Professional Development Model.

Districts must agree to evaluate of the impact of professional development on teacher practice and the resulting impact on student achievement and growth.

Districts must agree to improve the professional development they provide based on the result of their evaluations.

(E) Turning Around the Lowest-Achieving Schools (50 total points)

(E)(1) Intervening in the lowest-achieving schools and LEAs (10 points)

Overview and Current Status

In January 2010, Iowa identified 35 persistently lowest-achieving schools, with 6 schools in Tier One and 29 schools in Tier Two.

(E)(2) Turning around the lowest-achieving schools (40 points)

Overview and Current Status

Iowa currently has a Support System for Schools and Districts in Need of Assistance (SINA/DINA) that we have learned from in preparing our plans for this section.

State Plan

To support the schools identified as persistently lowest-achieving, we will build on our successes and lessons learned through our SINA/DINA process. Specifically, we will continue in the Phase 2 application to propose providing turnaround coaches to our persistently lowest-achieving schools, as well as providing subgrants to hire School Administration Managers, provide professional development, and/or provide extended learning opportunities to students in the schools.

We also will use Race to the Top funds to support the implementation of the Learning Supports program in schools experiencing achievement gaps between students in poverty and their more affluent peers.

District Participation

Because section (E) applies only to a small number of districts (18) there are no specific provisions in the general MOU under section (E).

Definitions of Terms

Common Core: The Common Core State Standards Initiative has been created and is being managed by the National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers. Forty-eight states, including Iowa, along with the District of Columbia and two territories, have signed onto this initiative. The intention is that the Common Core standards in English language arts and mathematics will define the knowledge and skills students should have to succeed in entry-level, credit-bearing, academic college courses and in workforce training programs, and that they will be internationally benchmarked.

Effective teachers and principals: Iowa will define “effectiveness” in the first year of the Race to the Top program.

High-minority school: Schools with minority enrollment over 25 percent. (“Low-minority” schools are schools with minority enrollment less than 10 percent.)

High-poverty school: Schools in the top quartile for free/reduced lunch eligibility. (“Low-poverty” schools are schools in the bottom quartile for free/reduced lunch eligibility.)

Highly effective teachers and principals: Iowa will define “highly effective” in the first year of the Race to the Top program.

Participating LEA: Participating LEAs in Iowa are school districts that agree to implementing the district’s components of the Race to the Top plan, as evidenced by submitting a signed MOU by 4:30 p.m. on May 14. According to the Race to the Top application, “Each participating LEA that receives funding under Title I, Part A will receive a share of the 50 percent of a State’s grant award that the State must subgrant to LEAs, based on the LEAs relative share of Title I, Part A allocations in the most recent year in accordance with section 14006© of the ARRA.”